

confident that a close examination would show that, at the least, five or six more species of Terns, most of which breed here, frequent the same localities.

I once saw the curious Scissor-bill a little below Thebes, but did not succeed in shooting it. It has also been killed at Damietta.

My remarks have extended to so much greater length than I had expected, that my list will have to be postponed a little while longer, during which time I may probably be able to add some more species to it. In conclusion, some apology is perhaps due for having kept pretty much to the ground touched upon by Dr. Leith Adams in his paper; but my excuse for having done so is the desire I felt to establish certain points, to correct others that seemed to require it, and, lastly, the necessity there was for adopting some plan for giving the most useful information within moderate limits.

XIX.—*Notes on Birds breeding in the Neighbourhood of Sydney.*

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[Continued from vol. v. p. 447.]

6. The YELLOW-TUFTED HONEY-EATER (*Ptilotis auricomis*, Gould, B. Austr. iv. pl. 37.).

The Yellow-tufted Honey-eater, although very common about Sydney, is perhaps one of the most beautiful species we have; nor are the eggs of this species less beautiful than the birds themselves.

It gives preference to the more open underwood of young *Eucalyptus* and Wattle trees (*Acacia decurrens*), which are plentiful near Dobroyde, Enfield, and Paramatta, rather than to the dense scrubland nearer the coast. I have met with this species as far inland as Manar, between Braidwood and Goulburn, where, through the kind assistance of my young friend, Mr. Herbert Gordon, I procured several rare specimens both of birds and eggs. Like most of its tribe, the Yellow-tufted Honey-eater is very partial to fruit, and, during the latter end of February and throughout the month of March, the pear-trees with us swarm with this and many other species. During the orange-

season also they visit us in great numbers, and many may be seen fighting over the half-decayed fruit with which the ground at that time is literally strewed. They seem very fond of exercising their pugnacious propensity upon the larger birds. Should a Hawk, an Owl, or sleepy Goatsucker make its appearance near them, it is sure to be attacked; and even their own species, being wounded and crying out, often shares the same fate. Ofttimes they may be seen to cluster upon the bare stem of a branch, huddling up together, so that many tread one upon the other, and scratching as if holding a jubilee over a vanquished foe, until perhaps another from a neighbouring tree will dart into the midst and put them all to flight.

This species remains with us throughout the whole year, breeding earlier than the generality of Honey-eaters. We have eggs in our collection taken early in June, and as late as the end of October, during which month they sometimes have a third brood. August and September seem to be their principal months for breeding.

Upon referring to my note-book, I find that I captured two young, well able to fly, upon the 18th July 1863, but during some seasons birds breed here much earlier than in others. The nest is a neat but somewhat bulky structure, open above, and composed of strips of the Stringy-bark tree* (*Eucalyptus*, sp.). The total length of the nest is about 4 inches by from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 inches wide, being 2 in. deep by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide inside. The eggs, which are usually two in number, are of a pale flesh-pink, darker at the larger end, where they are spotted and blotched with markings of a much deeper hue, inclining to salmon-colour; in some the marking forms a ring upon the thick end, in others one irregular patch with a few dots upon the rest of the surface. When freshly taken, they have a beautiful blush of pink, which they generally lose a few days after being blown. Their length is from 10 to 11 lines by 7 to 8 in breadth. Some varieties have a

* The innermost bark of this *Eucalyptus* is used much as ties for wood, hay, and straw, &c.; when twisted or plaited, it is found to make a tolerably strong rope. Almost all our birds use the inner bark of it for building their nests, lining them with fine shreds of the same material, or sometimes with silky cotton from the native plants.

few obsolete dots of faint lilac ; others are without markings, save one patch at the top of the larger end : like most of our Australian birds' eggs, they vary much in shape and in tint of colour. The site selected for the nest is usually some low bushy shrub, among the rich clusters of *Tecoma australis*, or carefully hidden in the thick tufts of *Blechnum* (*B. cartilagineum*), which often covers a space of many square yards in these clumps, where it clings to the stems of the ferns. I have several times found two or three pairs breeding at the same time within a few yards of each other. The ferns and *Tecomæ* seem to be their favourite places for breeding, although the nests may often be found placed suspended between forks in the small bushy oaks (*Casuarinæ*).

In the nest of this Honeyeater I have several times found the egg of a Cuckoo : this egg is of a very pale flesh-colour, $11\frac{1}{2}$ lines long by $8\frac{1}{2}$ broad, and usually without any markings. I have only seen one specimen with a few dots of black and dark reddish-brown upon a pale-flesh ground. From the nests of a species of *Ptilotis*, and also those of *Melithreptus lunulatus*, I have also taken the same eggs. I have not yet satisfied myself what species of Cuckoo they belong to ; but probably it will turn out to be *Cuculus cinereus*, Gould.

On January 30th 1864, I shot a very beautiful variety of *Ptilotis auricomis*, of a pale yellow colour above and below, having the ear-coverts and whiskers, front and sides of the head, throat, outer webs of tail, and wing-feathers brighter and a shade deeper in colour ; the shafts of all the feathers white ; the bill and claws brownish horn-colour ; iris dull blue ; feet and legs bluish lead-colour. I have since seen another specimen several times feeding in the pear-trees in our garden.

Both these specimens seemed to be very much scouted by the rest of their species, feeding quietly by themselves, sometimes in the clumps of *Loranthus* or upon the manna on the sides of the gum-trees (*Eucalyptus*), and occasionally in the garden upon the pear-trees.

Several times while about shooting one of these, I noticed a Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria australis*) perch close beside him, take an inquisitive look, and then uttering a harsh squeak fly off, as if quite disgusted with such a "freak of nature."